



**PARENTAL
ADVISORY**
EXPLICIT CONTENT

THIS COMEDY CONTAINS LANGUAGE,
IMAGES, AND ACTIONS NOT SUITABLE
FOR ALL AUDIENCES. UNACCOMPANIED
MINORS WILL NOT BE ADMITTED.

A SCIT PRODUCTION, GENEROUSLY FUNDED BY: GSC AND VPGE



THE ACHARNIANS OF ARISTOPHANES

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PLAYERS *in order of appearance*

JUSTIN CITTEE	JAMES KIERSTEAD
HERALD (YOUNGER PUSSY, MESSENGER)*	MAXINE HOLLAND
CAPTAIN AMERICA (JAY-Z)*	SARAH BRADFORD
AMBASSADOR (FRENCHMAN)*	ELERI COUSINS
MR. TALIBALONEY (KAZAKH, RUMSFELD)*	MATT SIMONTON
JUSTIN'S WIFE (KAZAKH, MESSENGER)*	BIANCA CARPENETI
JAY-Z'S ASSISTANT (OLDER PUSSY)*	ALICE HU
RUSSKIE*	AL DUNCAN
INFORMER (SOLDIER)*	JOHN SUTHERLAND
FRENCH FLUTIST	ZANA BASS
BEST MAN (SOLDIER, BODYGUARD)	JOSE ARMANDO PEREZ-GEA
MAID OF HONOR*	DEBORAH SOHN
THUG, RAPPER*	C.J. JAMESON
(*) DENOTES ACHARNIAN	

PRODUCTION

DIRECTOR	FOIVOS KARACHALIOS
PRODUCER	AL DUNCAN
COSTUMES & PROPS	ZANA BASS
CHOREOGRAPHY	NIKITA VASHI
SET PIECE CONSTRUCTION	BRIAN JONES

TRANSLATION

TRANSLATORS	JAMES KIERSTEAD, MATT SIMONTON, FOIVOS KARACHALIOS, JASON AFTOSMIS, RACHEL AHERN
LYRICS:	
‘THE COCK SONG’,	
‘PARABASIS RAP’	FOIVOS KARACHALIOS
‘NEVER SEEN A SMARTER MAN’,	
‘PEACE SO HORNY MEDLEY’	MATT SIMONTON



T H E C O M P A N Y

Rachel Ahern (Translator)

PhD Candidate, Classics

Rachel enjoyed her walk on the lighter side, spending some time translating Greek comedy, in the midst of the dark vortex that is the academic job market and PhD completion. She is putting the finishing touches on her dissertation (about Aristotelian rhetorical fireworks in Homeric direct speech) even as you read this.

Zana Bass (Costume/Prop Coordinator, French Flutist)

PhD Candidate, Classics, 1st Year

Zana prefers to work behind the scenes. Quietly.

Sarah Bradford* (Captain America, Jay-Z)

Senior

Sarah is from no place in particular (Army brat) but calls Korea her home. When asked about what appeals to her most about the Acharnians, she claims, "It reaffirms why I chose to double-major in Chemistry in Classics. You see, I've always wanted to wear a giant strap-on phallus, and when I suggested this to the Chemistry department, they completely shot me down." After graduation, Sarah will be commissioning into the Air Force and will be enrolled at OSU medical school.

Bianca Carpeneti* (Kazakh, Justin's wife, Chorus Member, Guy with Loudspeaker, Messenger)

Junior, double-major in Classics and Archaeology.

Born and raised in Juneau, Alaska, and with little background in theater, Bianca doesn't know how she ended up with so damn many parts. (Thanks, Foivos!) When she isn't sullyng herself in vulgar plays, she tries to make herself feel better with yoga, copious amounts of time outdoors, and genuinely terrible movies. Still, she is grateful for the chance to have met and worked with such stellar peeps.

Al Duncan* (Russkie, Producer)

PhD Candidate, Classics, 3rd Year

Al hails from the streets of Detroit, MI and brings a certain experience to the Russkie's trade. "I've sold cats before", Al said in an interview, "but never to such eager clients. I don't know what it is about the grad life at Stanford, but they just really go for those bananas." Al is about to embark on his dissertation dealing with ancient Greek tragedy and its performance. But as Socrates suggests in the *Symposium*, the tragic playwright should also be ply his hand at comedy.

Maxine Holland* (Herald, P.Diddy's Messenger, Younger Pussy)

Sophomore

This is Maxine's first time in theater. Through the encouragement of her academic advisor, she joined this SCIT production in order to become "more active" in the Classics community and meet other majors in the department. Based on her experience with this play, she has come to the conclusion that Classicists are shameless, indecent and morally reprehensible; and she likes it!

Alice Hu* (Jay-Z's Assistant, Pussy, Justin's Groupie)

Junior

Alice Hu is a junior from Seattle, WA, studying Classics (Latin and Greek) and History (War and Revolution). In her spare time she bakes compulsively, steals maga-

zines from the gym, and says 'You too!' in social situations where it is awkwardly in-applicable. Alice plans to put her Stanford education to good use as she pursues a glamorous and lucrative career as a sommelier. She wants to be Foivos Karachalios when she grows up.

C.J. Jameson* (Thug, Rapper)

Junior

C.J. Jameson is a Junior, majoring in Classics (Latin & Greek) and minoring in the dismal science. Previous credits include pass/no credit, taking credit, and standardized imperial credits. He looks forward to being an excellently grumpy old man some day. Thanks to the fam for not flipping out when I told you this morning that I was in a play. RTFO, Modesquad.

Foivos Karachalios* (Director, Translator)

PhD Candidate, Classics, 2nd Year

Foivos is a second-year PhD student at the Stanford Classics department, working on Archaic and Classical Greek Literature. As an undergraduate at Athens, he acted and directed on a few occasions, including playing Lysander in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Kay Kostopoulos' acting classes at Stanford, however, have been his most formative experience drama-wise. Aristophanes is Karachalios's personal favorite, and most of his work in recent years (including an MA thesis, an article and a couple of talks) is on the politics of his comedies.

James Kierstead (Justin Cittee, Translator)

PhD Candidate, Classics, 2nd Year

Having acted in more than a dozen plays at high school and university, James is keen to help kick-start what he hopes will become a tradition of productions of classical drama at Stanford. His mission is to increase understanding of ancient democracy through research, teaching, and jumping around on stage with an enormous artificial penis.

Matt Simonton* (General Rumsfeld, Kazakh Envoy, French Servant, Translator)

PhD Candidate, Classics, 3rd Year

This is Matt's second Aristophanes performance, and second as a member of the Bush administration. "I've really enjoyed the challenge of working through all the subtle variations of the phrase 'let's bomb some shit,'" says Matt. He thanks James, the Bugs Bunny to his Elmer Fudd, and Jess, his comic muse.

Deborah Sohn* (Maid of Honor)

Senior

Deborah is a senior this year, originally from Marietta, Georgia. *The Acharnians* is her first acting and gun-wielding experience. Thanks to everyone who made this show happen!

John Sutherland (Informant, Soldier)

PhD Candidate, Classics, 2nd Year

John's known aliases: (Mr.) Cucumber, The Cuke, Johnny Cukes. John was recently called drunken and disorderly in class. Unable to disagree, he blamed it on trying to find his inner actor. In his last critically acclaimed role, he starred as the hungry and disobedient fictional hare, Peter Rabbit. He would like to thank Granovetter, Niko, Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail, and Hopkins, his greatest influences and closest friends. 118J101, represent.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

THE ORIGINAL SETTING

The Acharnians was staged in Athens at 425 BCE and won first prize at the dramatic competition of the Lenaia, a local annual festival of great importance for the production of comedy. Aristophanes was at the time an up-and-coming comic poet, who had already enjoyed first place the previous year at the major Athenian festival of the City Dionysia (which attracted visitors from all around Greece). As all previous comedies are now lost, the *Acharnians*, Aristophanes' third play, is the oldest preserved comedy in the world.

At the time of production the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE) between Athens and Sparta (and their respective allies) was in its sixth year. The war had tremendous impact on the cities involved. It was not only about loss of life on the battlefield; sieges, destruction of the enemy's agricultural infrastructure (including the occupation of the Athenian countryside by the Spartans) and embargoes curtailed the production of even essential commodities and put a serious constraint on trade.

THE THEMES

The most prominent theme in the play is war and peace. However, this theme works alongside others, including political participation, tolerance of other people's views, freedom of speech, and freedom of trade. The protagonist, *Dikaiopolis* as he is called in the original (= "Just City"; he is called Justin Cittee in our play), makes a private peace-pact with the Spartans, because he sees the Athenian democracy as plagued by indifference and lack of participation. In the process of gaining the support of the Acharnians (residents of the region of Acharnai outside of Athens, which had been ravaged by the Spartans) he has to overcome the obstacle of the unwillingness to listen to a speech with an unfamiliar point of view. However, he does get permission to speak, and gradually he convinces the Acharnians in favor of peace.

What follows is the *parabasis* (= "stepping aside"), a part of the comedy where the Chorus speaks to the audience out of character and claims to be transmitting the words of the poet himself. Aristophanes thus again puts forward another theme that is prominent in the play, i.e. the ability of comedy to tackle serious political issues.

After the *parabasis* the second part of the play commences, where we see the protagonist's success materializing. His private peace has granted him the advantage of free trade, and he makes good use of it. In brief, as war for Justin Cittee ends, money-making starts.



THE INTERPRETATION

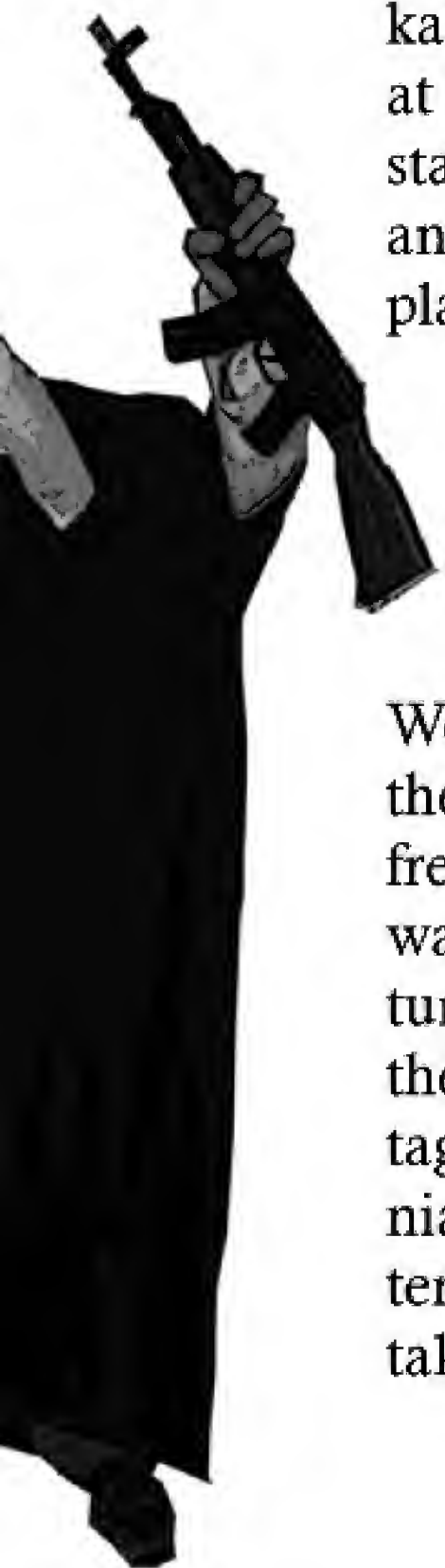
There is no consensus on how we should perceive Dikaiopolis' individualistic attitude in the second part of the play. Some critics argue that there is no shadow cast over his triumph whereas others think that there his behavior provides a negative example.

According to our interpretation, both factors operate: Justin's eventual triumph does function as a foil for the continuation of war by the rest of Athens; it shows the Athenians that they could have it so much better. At the same time, his triumph is a problematic one: he does not wish to offer anything back to the community. But it would just be too easy for Aristophanes to have his protagonist make private peace and then share it with everyone, so that all are happy in the end. What this play shows is that without collective action, without broad participation in the political process, this cannot be achieved. A private peace brings only private happiness. It places Dikaiopolis in an advantageous position from where he is able to exploit the misery of some and laugh at the troubles of others.

At the time of the *Acharnians*, the Greeks seem to have well formed the idea that they were one people—the idea of Panhellenism—despite the fact that they were still organized in independent city-states (*poleis*), each of which had its own identity and culture. It is to be expected that as Dikaiopolis abuses or exploits the poor Greeks from other cities who came to him, at least a part of the audience would have perceived this as an attack on the cruel stance of Athens against the city-states that were not part of the Athenian alliance. Aristophanes went on to express views in favor of Panhellenism in more plays, notably the *Peace* and the *Lysistrata*.

OUR PRODUCTION

We are presenting a performance that hopefully still manifests all the important themes of the original: war, political participation, freedom of speech, tolerance, free trade and exploitation. If the only theme that matters in the comedy were war, this comedy would not work as well today as it would have in, say, 2004. Fortunately, the *Acharnians* is concerned with themes that are always prominent in the life of our communities. It is in essence an angry comedy--much like its protagonist. In the original Greek, Dikaiopolis is willing to be beheaded if the Acharnians do not like his speech. In our version, Justin is attached to tortuous and potentially lethal electrodes. I think that we owed it to those fictional characters to take a risk ourselves as we translated and produced this play.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

CONTINUED

There is something in this play to offend everyone—but this is not gratuitous. The basic principle, and what Aristophanes claims explicitly twice in the play, is that comedy too can talk about right and wrong. Writing a comedy on human pain can drive the point home in a way that may strike the audience harder than tragedy. The scene where the Russian sells his daughters to Justin is a good example. It is not funny when people are so poor that they choose to prostitute their children. But as it is presented in comic way, this experience becomes much more unsettling for the audience. The same principle applies constantly and to see this play as a comedy that is sexist or xenophobic absolutely misses the point. To see it as comedy that invites the audience to free themselves of stereotypes and be able to trust and listen to a different point view is more effective. Nothing was off-limits for Aristophanes when he wrote comedy, but his provocations were part of a statement on the problems of human society. In the same spirit, we hope that this production employs humor to make a point on the effects of apathy, prejudice and individualism.

The cast and crew would like to extend their
SPECIAL THANKS
to the following groups and individuals for their diligence and care:

The Stanford Graduate Student Council
The Vice Provost of Graduate Education
Stanford Event & Labor Services
Black Community Services Center
Stanford Classics Department

Jason Aftosmis
Chris Gennuso
Zach Chotzen-Freund
Maud Gleason
Chris Golde
Anika Green
Margo Keeley
Marsh McCall
Andrew McClellan

Vince Tomasso, Sarah Janda, and the
"Are You Receiving Me?" Reception Workshop
Fletcher Wilson



TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

BY MATT SIMONTON

Shortly after SCIT made its decision to produce Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, we set ourselves the goal of creating our own translation as well. No one now can recall whose suggestion this was, nor, in hindsight, why on earth anyone would have considered it a good idea. And yet here we are, many, many months later, with an adaptation that arguably – perhaps very arguably – combines topicality, visual gags, choral antics, absurdity, truculence, and of course, oversized phal-luses in a form that Aristophanes could recognize.

Which is not to say we haven't fallen short in many places. One thing readers of the original Greek will miss is metrical verse throughout. Not one line of an Aristophanic comedy would have been spoken in prose, a poetic convention that strongly marked out dramatic performances from everyday speech. (There was thus no strict theatrical realism in the fashion we sometimes admire today.) Scarcely any translator attempts to recreate this effect in full, although the inimitable B.B. Rogers succeeded in his edition of 1910. Still, some parts, as you will see, are obviously in meter (and then some!), and we've tried to maintain a roughly iambic, "sing-songy" quality wherever possible.



And then there are the jokes. Aristophanes was a comedic genius, but there are times when his humor grates on a modern audience. (Repetition, in particular, was something the ancient Greeks apparently had a much greater tolerance for.) Old Comedy being expressly political, it also inevitably happens that many names and situations now appear to us as hopelessly arcane and parochial. Luckily for the adaptor of Aristophanes, our modern-day celebrities and political leaders remain, like their classical counterparts, scoundrels, hypocrites, and sexual reprobates, so only slight alterations are necessary to maintain the spirit of the original. Finally, there are hundreds of puns, sly references, snippets of gossip, and otherwise cheeky "knowing winks" which are impossible to capture in any language other than ancient Greek, but which we tried to find contemporary parallels for wherever we could.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

CONTINUED

Some specifics: Our starving Russian is based on Aristophanes' Megarian, a man from a blockaded enemy town of Athens'. Aristophanes also had fun with his foreign characters' accents and national peccadilloes. "Captain America" was originally "Amphitheos," a man with "gods on both sides of his family tree." America's legendary figures are its gods, so Betsy Ross makes about as much sense as an ancestor as one of the mythical patrons of Athens, Demeter. "Mr. Talibaloney" derives from "Pseudartabas," a Persian ambassador in the original whose name also suggests lying. He too speaks in mostly unintelligible gibberish (Orientalism has a long pedigree, unfortunately). And yes, we know Donald Rumsfeld never held a military position, but his reputation (and proximity!) made him a perfect candidate for the role of Lamachus, the hyper-patriotic war enthusiast of the *Acharnians*.

"Cock songs," on the other hand, would seem to have no modern equivalent.

The translation was prepared by James Kierstead, Matt Simonton, Foivos Karachalios, Jason Aftosis, and Rachel Ahern. Complaints about vulgarity and cultural insensitivity should be directed to Mr. Aristophanes of Cydathenaus.

